CLAIMS

1. A method for permitting access to an electronic system, comprising:

receiving at least a first and second signal, wherein each signal indicates a state change of a corresponding switch, wherein each state change is in response to a selector being urged in a particular direction;

said electronic system comparing each signal with a group of predetermined signals and a direction associated with each signal of said group of predetermined signals; and

permitting access to an operating mode of said electronic system when said comparing action determines that each signal accords with said group of predetermined signals and said direction associated with each signal of said group of predetermined signals.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein said electronic system is a computing device.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein said selector is located on a cover of said computing device.

4. The method of claim 2, wherein said selector is located proximate to a keyboard of said laptop computer.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein said first and second signals are generated using directional arrow keys which are proximate to a key board of said laptop computer.

6. The method of claim 2, wherein said permitting action further comprises allowing access to a protected file.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein said selector is located on an external device, and wherein said external device is coupled to said electronic system through an input to said electronic system.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein said input to said electronic system is by way of a wireless interface.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein said electronic system is a portable messaging device, and said selector is located on a housing of said portable messaging device.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein said first and second signals are generated by way of said selector being urged in substantially orthogonal directions.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein said first and second signals are generated by way of said selector being urged in substantially opposite directions.

12. An electronic system which enters an operational mode based on inputs from a direction-sensitive and touch-activated security device, comprising:

a signal conditioner for receiving a plurality of signals wherein each signal indicates a state change of one of a plurality of corresponding switches, said state change being in response to a selector being urged in a first or a second direction;

a processor for comparing the plurality of signals output from said signal conditioner with a predetermined group of signals, wherein each signal of said predetermined group of signals is associated with an accompanying direction; and

an access control circuit which permits the use of said operational mode based on the results of said comparing action.

13. The electronic system of claim 12 wherein said direction-sensitive and touch-activated security device is located external to said electronic system.

14. The electronic system of claim 12 wherein said electronic system is a laptop computer and said direction-sensitive and touch-activated security device is located on a cover of said laptop computer.

15. The electronic system of claim 12 wherein said electronic system is a laptop computer and said direction-sensitive and touch-activated security device is located proximate to a keyboard of said laptop computer.

16. The laptop computer of claim 15 wherein said first and second directions are substantially orthogonal to each other.

17. The laptop computer of claim 15 wherein said first and second directions are substantially opposite to each other.

18. In a portable computer, a method of permitting said portable computer to be removed from a docking station, comprising:

receiving a first signal which conveys that a selector has been urged toward a first direction;

receiving a second signal which conveys that said selector has been urged along a second direction, said second direction being different from said first direction;

comparing said first and second signals with a predetermined sequence of signals, each signal of said predetermined sequence of signal being associated with a particular direction; and

permitting undocking of said portable computer when said comparing action determines that said first and second signals accord with said predetermined sequence of signals.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein said selector is located external to said computing device.

20. The method of claim 18, wherein said selector is located on a retractable surface which emanates from the case of said portable computer.

21. The method of claim 18, wherein said selector is located on the top cover of said portable computer.

22. The method of claim 18, wherein said selector is located proximate to a keyboard of said portable computer.

23. The method of claim 18, wherein said first and second directions are substantially orthogonal to each other.

24. The method of claim 18, wherein said first and second directions are substantially opposite to each other.

25. The method of claim 18, wherein said permitting action includes said portable computer releasing a retaining device.

26. The method of claim 18, wherein said permitting action includes a docking station releasing a retaining device which is used to retain said portable computer.

27. A method for permitting access to a computing device, comprising:

receiving signals from a touchpad, said signals representing the movements of a user's finger tracing a pattern on said touchpad,

comparing said signals with at least one group of predetermined signals associated with movements of said user's finger tracing said pattern on said touchpad; and

permitting access to an operating mode of said computing device when said comparing action determines that said signals representing movements of said user's finger tracing a pattern on said touchpad accords with said at least one group of predetermined signals associated with movements of said user's finger tracing said pattern on said touchpad.

28. The method of claim 27 wherein said computing device is a laptop computer.

29. The method of claim 28, wherein said touchpad is located proximate to a keyboard of said laptop computer.

30. A program storage device readable by a machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by said machine to perform method steps for directing a portable computer to enter an operational mode, said method comprising:

receiving signals from a touchpad, said signals representing the movements of a user's finger tracing a pattern on said touchpad,

comparing said signals with a group of predetermined signals associated with movements of said user's finger tracing said pattern on said touchpad; and

permitting access to an operating mode of said computing device when said comparing action determines that said signals representing movements of said user's finger tracing a pattern on said touchpad accords with said group of predetermined signals associated with movements of said user's finger tracing said pattern on said touchpad.

31. The method of claim 30 wherein said permitting action further comprises allowing a user to access a protected file.

32. The method of claim 30 wherein said computing device is a laptop computer.

33. The method of claim 32, wherein said touchpad is located proximate to a keyboard of said laptop computer.